

OPINION

By professor PhD Rositsa Stoyanova,

Member of the scientific jury

For the announced competition, for holding the academic title "Associate professor",

Field of higher education 2. Humanitarian sciences;

Professional direction 2.2. History and archaeology

(International relations in the Balkans in the 19th century")

For the needs of section "Modern Balkans" in the Institute for Balkan Studies with a Center for
Tracology (IBSCT), Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

In issue 85 of the State Gazette of 25 Oct. 2022, an advertisement was published for the occupation of the "Associate Professor" academic position in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.2. History and Archeology (International relations in the Balkans in the 19th century"). The need and the theme of the competition were argued and defended before the Scientific Council of the Institute for Balkan Studies with a Center for Tracology (IBSCT) by the "Modern Balkans" section. The only candidate who submitted documents and was allowed to participate is Dr. Simeon Andonov Simeonov.

Dr. Simeonov received his higher education, majoring in History (with BA and MA) at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, after which he completed a second Master's program in Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, USA. In 2021, he earned a PhD with a thesis on "Empire of Consuls: Consulship, Sovereignty and Empire in the Revolutionary Atlantic (1778-1848)" again in the USA, at Brown University. His work experience includes working as a researcher and visiting lecturer at university and research centers in the USA, respectively, and since 1st July 2021 he is part of the scientific team of the IBSCT. The language training of the candidate is impressive - he fluently speaks five foreign languages.

In the current competition, Dr. Simeonov participated with two monographs and six studies and articles published in reputable scientific journals. As the main habilitation thesis, he presented the monograph "Francisco de Miranda in the Balkans: The Birth of the Idea of Latin American Independence". All publications concern various aspects of international relations, and some of them specifically refer to international relations in the Balkans. Thus, the candidate's scientific interests and publication activities fit into the issues that the IBSCT, and specifically

the "Modern Balkans" section, would like to develop. The author reference for the publications and citations attached to the documents shows that Dr. Simeonov meets the requirements regulated by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as those in the Regulations on the Terms and Procedures for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupancy of Academic positions of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and in the Appendix to the Regulations of the Scientific Council of the IBSC.

As the candidate himself points out, his scientific activity is focused in 5 main directions - international relations, globalization, transnational and "intertwined" history, new diplomatic history and digital humanitarian studies. Combined, the first four of these are present in all publications. They find a common point of intersection in Dr. Simeonov's central theme of the consular institution and consuls, of their role and place in the formation of the new global world, in the creation of "modern concepts of universal civil and human rights", in the process of "building the modern capitalist system" and of shaping the "international consensus on the meaning of state sovereignty" (Builders of the Western World. How the Consuls Created the Modern International Order, p. 11). His interest is attested and convincingly defended in the monographic study cited above and in almost all articles and studies. To the extent that the book and some of the publications were written on the basis of the dissertation work defended by the colleague, they have already been the subject of a positive assessment and I will not dwell on them in detail. I would just like to emphasize that even here, the author uses and applies the tools and approaches that we also find in the habilitation thesis, based on the analysis of empirical material mainly for the leading consular services in the Western world in the first half of the 19th century, he reaches and formulates conclusions on the role of the consular institution in the transformation of European colonial states into modern nation states. Here is the place to highlight his contribution to the creation (together with his colleagues from the Department of Mathematics of Brown University) of a new digital platform for the study of the international relations of the young American Republic (1776–1865) called "*Mapping the Early American Foreign Service*". The site contains information on 3,780 consular and diplomatic appointments in the first 80 years of the history of the United States of America.

As the main habilitation thesis for participation in the competition, Dr. Simeonov presents the monograph "*Francisco de Miranda in the Balkans: The Birth of the Idea of Latin*

American Independence". C., 2022, IBSC, 155 pages, scientific reviewers: Prof. Dr. R. Preshlenova, Prof. Dr. R. Daskalov. The choice of the topic is unusual for Bulgarian historiography, but it is nevertheless interesting and expands historical knowledge with the analysis of an unused text of a traveler who visited the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 18th century. Apart from being known for his activity and revolutionary ideas, Francisco de Miranda was probably one of the first Latin American travelers to have contact with the Balkans. The structure adopted by the author adequately reflects and is consistent both with the text being analyzed and with the goals and tasks that Dr. Simeonov sets for himself. They, together with the critical review of the sources and historiography, with the argumentation of the approaches in the development of the topic, are substantiated in the introduction. The following are 6 chapters, shaped according to Miranda's life path and the chronology of his stay in the Balkans. At the same time, in each of them the author places the corresponding accent or accents. Such a construction of the monograph's text makes it possible to present in development the overlaps in Miranda's impressions, to reconstruct the influence they exerted on the formulation of his revolutionary views and strategy. In the conclusion, Simeonov draws the conclusions he reaches, without, however, repeating what has already been said in the presentation, he also presents his views on the development of new research fields.

The contribution nature of the habilitation work is beyond doubt. In addition to bringing new or little-known sources into scientific circulation, in addition to the rich bibliographic awareness that the colleague demonstrates, the research is also helpful with the choice of the topic, and with the used approaches and concepts from the arsenal of "intertwined" history, of microhistory, of the "new diplomatic history" and of global history. Moreover, the monograph is as much about the Latin American traveler's stay in the Balkans as it is about the diplomatic and consular networks in the region. The conclusions reached by Dr. Simeonov are important, well-argued and open up new fields for research and analysis.

Highly appreciating the habilitation work of the colleague, I would allow myself to make two recommendations. As the monograph is mainly intended for the Bulgarian audience, it would be good if the edition included a more detailed text dedicated to Miranda himself. The brief biographical reference in tabular form, placed at the very beginning of the edition, is rather dry and would hardly satisfy the reader's curiosity. In a similar direction - to expanding

the information - is my other recommendation, addressed to the book, but also to future publications by Dr. Simeonov. Namely, to give more detailed data (in the main text or in the scientific apparatus) about the individual consuls, diplomats, and other persons mentioned in the exhibition.

Finally, I would like to highlight the wonderful style in which the monograph is written - a rich and precise statement, at the same time a readable and intriguing narrative, with attention to detail.

Apart from the mandatory indicators to be covered under the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Dr. Simeonov has also provided information about his other activities. The colleague participated in the implementation of two scientific projects funded by the National Institute of Scientific Research, in numerous scientific forums, won a number of awards and is a member of several scientific organizations.

I do not detect any plagiarism in the works presented. The attached author reference objectively reflects Simeonov's scientific contributions.

In conclusion: The thorough acquaintance with the materials of the competition and especially with the presented scientific production give me reason to conclude that the colleague is a scientist with diverse interests and knowledge, with excellent methodological training and with great potential which he is about to develop in future. As a member of the Scientific Jury, I will vote for Dr. Simeon Andonov Simeonov to be proposed to the Scientific Council of the Institute of Balkan Studies with a Center for Tracology for the academic position of "Associate Professor".

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prof. R. Stoyanova